

This pamphlet was researched and drafted by members of the Baltimore area support group for the Anarchist Black Cross. We are a prisoner solidarity group with a specific focus on supporting political prisoners and victims of politically motivated imprisonment, and we are working on local monitoring of Maryland's control units for the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons. We are publishing this pamphlet both to share the experiences of the hundreds of men who have suffered through these institutions with more people on the outside of the prison system, who are all too often unaware of the injustices of our prison system, and to work on building a radical dialogue with activists and concerned people in our communities about strategies for fighting the injustice system. Much of the information in this pamphlet is incomplete, and some of what we did include is uncorroborated. In particular, we have only begun researching conditions at the Maryland House of Corrections - Annex recently, so our information on it is very limited. We will be revising this pamphlet within the next few months for wider local distribution and hopefully the revised edition will be more complete and accurate. If you have any corrections to make, additional information to include, or any other input, please contact us. Thank you for your time...

Baltimore ABC
P.O. Box 22203
Baltimore, MD 21203

TOTAL CONTROL IN THE "FREE STATE" Control Units in Maryland

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By the author

A member of the staff of the Maryland House of Corrections - Annex, who has been in the control units for several years, has written this pamphlet. It is a draft report prepared for the meeting of the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons Chicago, Illinois, 21-22 October 1995.

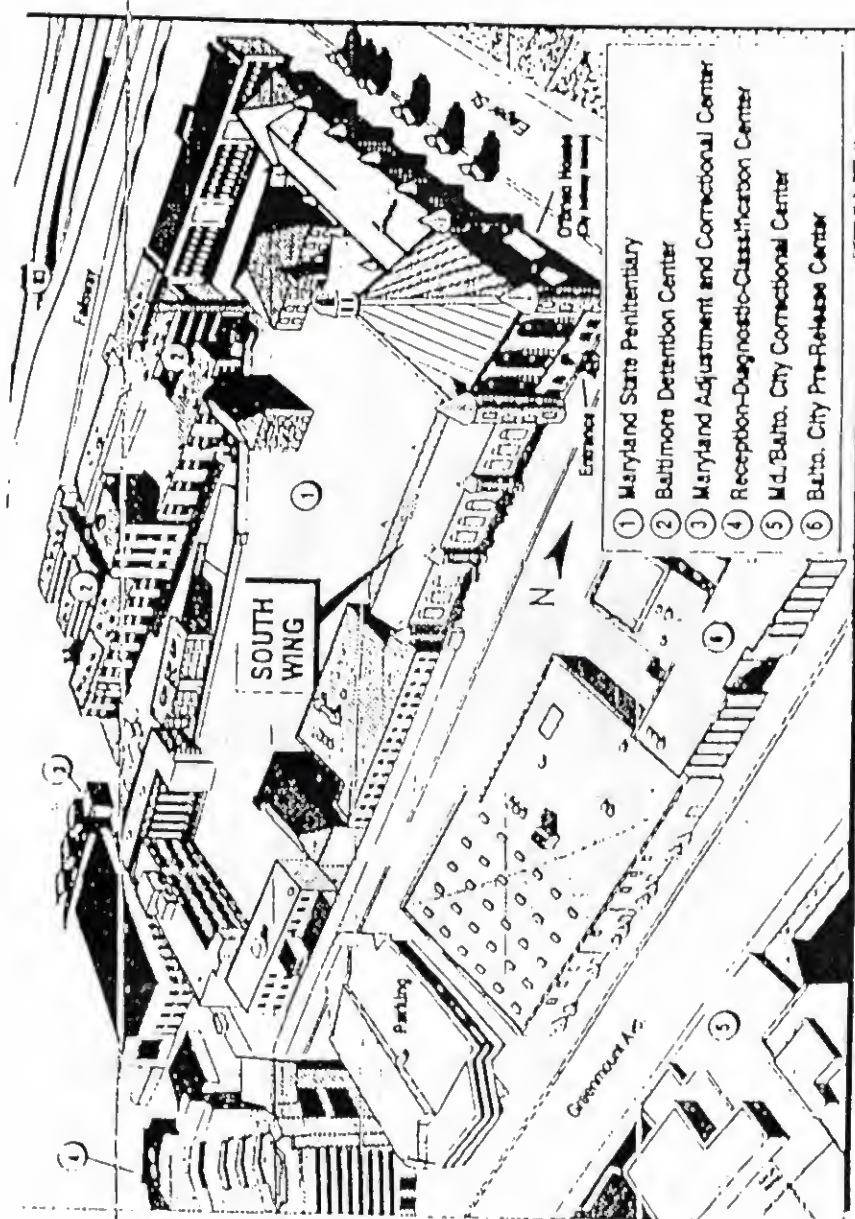
Officer wounds 2, kills himself at police headq

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A draft report prepared for the meeting of the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons Chicago, Illinois, 21-22 October 1995

by the Baltimore Anarchist Black Cross



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Special Litigation Officer / Civil Liberties Division
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Washington, DC

Governor Parris Glendening
Governor's Mansion
Annapolis, MD 21401

Richard Lanham, Commissioner
Paul Davis, Parole Commissioner
Md. Dept. Of Corrections
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Baltimore, MD 21215

Medical care:
Visitation privileges:

Ratio of guards to prisoners:
Guards' salaries:

APPENDIX B: CONTACT ADDRESSES

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Mauri' Saalakhani
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INTRODUCTION

David Hale was a guard at the maximum security Federal Penitentiary at Marion, Illinois, on October 28, 1983, the day that prison guards with batons, Mace, shields and helmets "shook down" every cell. The next day the prison was "locked down," turning the prison, in the words of the warden, into a "closed-unit operation"—a situation that persists to the present day. He described to a reporter for Mother Jones magazine the rampage by guards and prisons officers that inaugurated the era of the control unit prison:

"I seen them carry one inmate down the corridor with a guard on each leg and one on each arm. The assistant warden comes down the hall and grabs the inmate's testicles and starts yanking on them, saying, 'Who's doing it to who now, boy?' Well that was a signal for every guard in the place to do whatever the hell he wanted. I can't describe it to you—I never seen anything like that. At least fifty guys got it, maybe more."

The lock-down was just the beginning. The "closed-unit operation" at Marion has served as a model for a new breed of prisons—the control unit—in thirty-six states. Presiding over these prisons is the control unit par excellence, the Federal ADX of the Correctional Complex at Florence, Colorado.

Punishment and Reward

Punishment and its companion reward surround us; most of us live, die or become injured by it. We are introduced to it in our families, schools and often our religious institutions. We are inundated with stories and images of retribution in periodicals, television programs and films. We are inculcated with it in the business world, military service and—for growing numbers of us—in prisons. The American way of justice is revenge and escalation of terror; the American ethic is based on the notion that we all are "doing it" to each other.

Obsession with punishment and reward should come as no surprise in a society such as ours that takes exploitation for granted and readily writes off whole categories of people because of their position in the system of economic

production, their inability to "compete", their ethnic heritage and their sex—when it does not actively persecute them. Reward is the self-righteous face of punishment. Punishment is heaped upon the weak; reward is taken by the victors. The victors determine what the punishments and rewards are. Hence the poor are punished for their poverty by having what little security they can find in public welfare funds taken away. Real wages are diminishing, and unemployment climbs steadily. Prison awaits those who try to fulfill their needs and desires by other means; at least half of all criminal convictions in the United States are for "crimes against property"—over sixty per cent, if robberies are counted. The U.S. has the highest rate of incarceration among industrialized countries: as of 1992, 426 of every 100,000 persons was incarcerated. The U.S. prison population is disproportionately African, Native American and Latino. Women, the segment of society that universally is in the most precarious economic position, make up the fastest growing portion of the prison population. Hundreds are considered valueless—not even write-offs—and put to death. Over two hundred human scapegoats have gone this way since the death penalty was relegalized in 1976. Nearly 3000 await their turn in prisons across the land. In the meantime the rich—predominantly white and male—award themselves tax breaks, dismantle what little legal sanction may have existed to protect against the vagaries of capital, arm themselves with the technology and weapons for achieving future conquests, increase the powers of the police, spend over \$90 billion a year on prisons and "criminal justice" agencies—all the while pontificating about their icy virtues and the war against the moral depravity of the poor and ethnic minorities.

The collective punishment that characterized the lock-down at Marion is attractive to the powerful and is the very core of the control unit project. "Anti-gang" laws on the streets target poor, urban African and Latino youth en bloc. An officer of the Los Angeles Police Department recently told a Neighborhood Watch group, "Gangbangers wear expensive athletic shoes and clean, starched T-shirts," the characteristic distinguishing them from other well-groomed young people apparently being obvious: the color of their skin. "Administrative segregation" is the term used in prison to rationalize the further persecution of whole categories of prisoners who are considered potential "administrative problems." Whereas "disciplinary segregation" has been used to punish or control individual prisoners considered culpable for a certain infraction within prison (presumably carefully limited by Constitutional law), "administrative segregation" is applied to suspected gang members and—of great concern to activists—to prisoners who have been

the fact that inmates have little or no informal relationships with c.o.'s - however unpleasant and unequal they might have been before - through which to resolve these situations as they arise, and an unclear picture of the chain-of-command structure through which to register formal complaints.

Ratio of guards to prisoners:

Guards' salaries:

Maryland House of Corrections - Annex (segregation unit)

P.O. Box 534

Jessup, MD 20794

Phone:

Warden: William Smith

Medical Director:

Mental Health Director:

Budgetary information:

The lockdown (PC, ad seg, and punitive segregation) unit has 144 cells (the entire institution is currently holding 1675 inmates). We don't have any information on number of inmates but its generally double-bunked well over its capacity (this in an institution that's supposedly 'protective custody'")

Inmate breakdown:(figures show the MHCX as a whole, none were available for the lockdown unit)

race: 79.5% "Black", 20.3% "white", .2% "other

age: 23% age 17-25, 45% age 26-35, 32% older

sentence: 49% serving terms of 15 years and up, 24.2% are serving life terms.

Average time served so far is about 3½ years.

conviction: 29% serving murder conviction, 12% robbery. Almost 15% of inmates have no more serious convictions than court violations, and another 10% are imprisoned on drug charges.

Layout information:

Work, services, programs:

Inmates' possessions:

entering the MCAC. After 90 days, inmates can begin the process of earning the "privileges" of getting their radios, TV's, typewriters, etc. back (or the "privilege" of being allowed to buy new ones). Regulations regarding the size of appliances permissible are unclear and change regularly, so inmates are never sure if their only possessions might be confiscated at any point for no reason other than "changes in regulations". Inmates are very rarely, if at all, allowed to make telephone calls.

Medical care:

Sick-calls cost inmates \$2.00 each, on top of the cost of any medications that might be prescribed. Therapists or mental health counselors are generally not available to inmates.

Visitation privileges:

Inmates are allowed to receive 5 to 10 visits per month. All visits are non-contact and take place over telephones that don't seem to work all that often. Visiting hours are Mon/Wed/Fri 4:30 to 8:00 pm and Sat/Sun 8:30 am to 3:00 pm.

Major complaints of inmates:

Unclear classification procedures. It's been described to us as a "maximum p.c." - i.e. a lot of people get sent there from other institutions with no major violations or high security status, just some administrative excuse about classification. There's also no clear procedure for being transferred out, which leads to feeling of hopelessness and despair among inmates.

"Rookie" guards. Up until this spring, brutality and abuse complaints were everyday occurrences. In the past several months, however, the use of methods like these seem to have diminished, and at least some of the c.o.'s involved have been transferred or resigned. While some of the old "skull-crackers" are still around, (Cpt. Lee was one of the guards mentioned) a more common complaint is that the guard shifts are almost all primarily composed of "rookies", most of whom have been working there less than a year. This situation, where there is no familiarity or understanding between guards and inmates, heightens tensions on both sides and creates an atmosphere where rules and standards of procedure aren't clear. There are still complaints of harassment of all sorts as well as of inmates belongings being confiscated due to changes in or unclear regulations, for example, and these relatively minor concerns inevitably are exacerbated by

convicted of crimes stemming from their political activities, to prisoners who have been sentenced on the basis of their political affiliations and beliefs, as well as to those who organize other prisoners around legal and political issues.

The Purpose of this Pamphlet

The pamphlet before you was written with two purposes: (1) to demonstrate how control units—as the penal ideology taken to its logical conclusion and the prison system at its most intense—have pernicious personal and social effects related to class, race and gender; (2) to offer several recommendations both for the abolition of control units, as a step in the dismantling of the prison system, and for practicable alternatives to the prison system, as a way of building new concepts of justice and the equitable organization of society.

Section 1 provides a brief history of the development of control units, from the infamous maximum-security federal prison at Alcatraz to the euphemistically named (and obscurely abbreviated) Administrative Maximum Facility (ADX) at Florence Colorado. In this way both technical and political definitions of "control unit" are developed.

Section 2 is an examination of Maryland's prisons, from which the Maryland Correctional Adjustment Center (MCAC) and the Maryland House of Corrections (MHC) Annex have been selected as examples of control units. Evidence of conditions and punitive practices in these prisons is based on both documentary evidence and on the testimony of prisoners who have been in close contact with the Baltimore Anarchist Black Cross. This section concludes with a critical review of the official investigation led by the U.S. Department of Justice into the conditions at the MCAC. It provides a chronology of the investigation, a summary of possible outcomes and an explanation of the impediments, structural shortcomings and contradictions in the legal and institutional process.

Section 3, the conclusion, contains the recommendations of the Anarchist Black Cross on four subjects: (1) tracking the official investigation of the MCAC, including options for action by prisoner support and activist groups depending on the progress and outcome of the investigation; (2) shutting down the MCAC and MHC Annex and eventually all control units; (3) community-based alternatives to

prisons—a criticism of the entire penal/prison system. (4) critique of the prison system, contextualized in its place in the economic/political system as a whole.

The pamphlet also has two appendices. Appendix A is a list of answers to general questions about regional control units, in this case the MCAC and MHC Annex, posed by the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons (NCSCUP) for general monitoring of these units. Appendix B is a list of addresses: local, state and federal authorities dealing with prisons as well as prison activist organizations.

October 1995
Baltimore, MD

sentence: over 70% are serving 15 years or more, with 33% of that number serving life or death sentences. the average timemost inmates have served so far is about 7 years. one thing which doesn't show up in these figures but we've heard various reports of from inmates is the fact that to make the numbers work out better, when this count was taken, about 30 inmates from the Pen were moved into one wing of prison and then moved out within two weeks. its not clear how this would show up in the figures if it was taken into account... 40% are serving time for murder; about 25% for robbery and 15% for assault charges.

Layout information:

The building is laid out in "6 housing units, each contained in 3 columns (A, B, and C)". (see diagram page) This makes 18 pods total, each of which house up to 12 inmates. Each pod contains one shower (which sometimes everyone on the pod can get to use in one day, if they're lucky), and one recreation area which is six to eight feet wide by "maybe twenty feet" long with a staircase running down the middle of it. This is the only place where inmates can exercise, as the outdoor rec yard has been closed for nearly two years. The cells themselves, where inmates spend on average 23 hours a day, are roughly 9'x9' with one corner angled in, and contain a toilet, an iron table with a stool, a shelf on the wall, and a concrete bed attached to the floor with two slots in it for clothing. There are electrically controlled steel doors which are operated from the central control room of each level, and meals are pushed through a feed slot to the inmates at mealtimes.

Work, services, programs:

No inmates at the MCAC are allowed to work. The food preparation and cleaning are done by teams of inmates brought in from the city jail (BCCC). Inmates are not allowed to congregate for religious services, but the institution does employ a Catholic priest and an Islamic coordinator who make rounds of the institution to meet with prisoners and perform religious services. Access to library or law library is difficult, inmates have to fill out request slips (including ICBN numbers or case citation numbers!) and wait to see if the item they requested is available.

Inmates' possessions:

All personal property beyond clothing and basic needs are confiscated upon

APPENDIX A: CONTROL UNIT SPECIFICS

Maryland Department of Public Safety [sic] and Corrections
6776 Reisterstown Rd.
Baltimore, MD

Phone: (410) 764-4100

Secretary: Bishop Robinson

Commissioner: Richard A. Lanham, Sr.

Classification Director: Art Crawford

Parole Commissioner: Paul Davis

Classification Procedure: Supposedly inmates are sent to one institution or another based on their ranking determined by the "Classification Instrument" (DCD 100-1). We weren't able to get a copy when we requested it, but other activists we talked to basically said it wasn't even worth reading unless you wanted to get yourself hopelessly confused...

Maryland Correctional Adjustment Center (MCAC)

401 E. Madison St.

Baltimore, MD 21202

Phone: (410) 539-5445

Warden: Eugene Nuth

Medical Director:

Mental Health Director:

Budgetary information:

The cost of building the institution was \$22,500,000. We don't have any information about current operating costs.

The institution has 288 cells, and held 203 prisoners as of July 1995. (that's about 1% of total DOC population.)

Inmate breakdown: (as of July 1995)

race: 90.4% "Black", 8.6% "white", 1% "other"

age: nearly half (48.3%) aged 26-35. about 30% between 18-25, with the rest older than 35

I. DEVELOPMENT OF U.S. CONTROL UNITS

From the Rock to ADX

In the United States during the 1960s, the contradiction between the growing movement demanding a penal system based on rehabilitation rather than punishment, and institutions such as Alcatraz, that unabashedly promoted punishment and repression as a means of control, resulted in the closing of Alcatraz, but concurrently the establishment of a new, more covert and sophisticated form of psychological and physical torture-the control unit. Today, over 36 states in the U.S. operate these control unit, supermaximum security prisons.

Alongside the prison reform movement, which extended from inside the prison walls to outside, was a growing revolutionary movement, challenging the basis of institutions of imperialism, patriarchy and white supremacy. As these movements became a serious threat, the United States covert agencies imprisoned members of revolutionary groups, as well as potentially revolutionary sectors of the population. As race and gender oppression have been fundamental cornerstones of the development of the U.S., non-co-opted race/class/gender consciousness of the population who reside in the US, challenges the basis of the U.S. exploitive hierarchy-society itself.

COINTELPRO (U.S. Counter Intelligence Program) and other FBI programs, as well as more recently instituted laws, such as RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations), targeted community organizers who challenged U.S. dominance in their respective communities, by framing them on trumped up, questionable charges. Organizers in the Black Panthers, the Black Liberation Army, the American Indian Movement (AIM), the John Brown Anti-Klan League, the Revolutionary Armed Task Force (RAF), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Weather Underground, the Puerto Rican Independence Movement as well as other revolutionary organizations, were imprisoned, given extended sentences in many of this country's most repressive control units. The majority of these leaders still are serving terms in control unit prisons.

The specifically political purpose of control units is to punish and seclude leaders of revolutionary movements, as well as anyone who threatens the power hierarchy in America. Control units are a clear example of the use of imprisonment as social control, without a remote claim of the promotion of rehabilitation. They are "experiments" designed to break the spirit through isolation and forced helplessness. Results of these "experiments" has been increased violence and brutality on the part of the prison system, and resulted in serious mental illness, and pain and suffering, on the part of the inmate. A stronger network has also emerged to support organizers inside control units, exposing the political nature of imprisonment.

"High Tech Torture Has Been Perfected"

In 1963 Alcatraz closed, and the U.S. Penitentiary (U.S.P.) Marion opened this same year. Marion was the first of a new type of a prison-within-a-prison, using high-tech behavior modification and solitary confinement. Although officials claim that Marion is used for "more violent offenders," the reality is that prisoners are sent there for number of reasons including being a political prisoner sent directly from court, being a jailhouse lawyer, being "potentially difficult to control," or being in an overcrowded prison. For example, 17% of inmates at Marion have been sent from overcrowded D.C. prisons.

After the creation of Marion as the first complete control unit, other control units, more brutal than Marion were established. All of these units have in common the creation of an extreme power inequality within the institutions, between prison administration and prisoners, with no oversight from outside. The guards, who are often oppressed in the overall social system, act as maintainers of the system, and dynamics between guard and prisoner represent the acting out of the hierarchy and control established in the penal system. Many have said, "look at the prisons and you can see the society," and this is quite true of control units, where social relations are the most stark.

Isolation housing can be ordered by "administrative measures with no judicial oversight and no opportunity for defense counsel," and has "permitted corrections officers to employ the measure vindictively, capriciously, and unfairly."

These new units were often hidden from the public, built in isolated, economically

motives, anyway. Crime destroys social bonds; prisons destroy social bonds. Perhaps concentrating more on rebuilding those social bonds in a way that's independent from imperial state control will lead us away from both crime and imprisonment.

But beyond any specific reforms to the prison system that might be possible and desirable, we want to remain committed to discussing the issue in terms of abolitionism, in terms of looking at the prison system the way it is today as being a direct product of the authoritarian, white supremacist, patriarchal, and capitalist economic and political power structures we live under. Rather than put all of our energies into fixing the symptoms of this system, we are hoping that the struggle against control units in Maryland will lead us into new dialogues about how to overthrow those structures as a whole. Prisons aren't ever going to just disappear under capitalism, any more than crime is. Regardless of how inhumane and devastating it is on a human level, a repression-based penal system is actually better suited to the Amerikkkan way of life than any of the other options. Amerikka wasn't built on being humane and nurturing on a human level. Today its cheaper economically for the state to keep the potentially insurrectionary colonial populations in its cities under control through the deterrents of police and prison than it would be to undertake a full-scale military occupation. And because the two-headed coin of crime/imprisonment comes intrinsically connected to the justification for its own existence, it is cheaper politically as well: there's no need to make unpopular political statements; all the politicians need to say is "safer streets", the crowds on strings will cheer and cast their votes, and more police and more prisons will be unleashed to act out their genocidal power trips on neighborhoods already on the verge of collapse under the economic, cultural, psychological, and emotional pressures the system already weighs on them. Prisons are cheaper and easier - from the point of view of the people who run society - than any social change towards equality or freedom, so you know no kind of change is going to come from that quarter. The task is left to us, as abolitionists, to work toward building a movement that can overthrow all structures of oppression and begin to organize our communities along lines of love and cooperation. A world without prisons.

We hope to see further progress of the ACLU/DOJ investigation into conditions at the MCAC, with our eyes on the prize of abolishing all control unit prisons; we also wish to support the work of the newly formed Maryland chapter of CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants) and other community based groups who are exploring and promoting alternatives to incarceration. We realize, however, that the problems of "crime" today (as it is legally and socially defined) are deeply rooted in the inequality, oppression, and despair that capitalist expansion and institutionalized white supremacy have created in America's cities, and cannot be fully addressed without calling into question the entire system.

It should be obvious from any perspective that reforms to the death penalty, control units, and the failed policies of control through deterrence and removal they exemplify, are necessary in any society that even pretends to be humane. This is the basic tactical agreement that should unite us. And its with this in mind that we're watching with interest the progress of the Department of Justice investigation into conditions at the MCAC. We believe its possible to use the contradictions between different elements of the ruling elite to win real improvements in the conditions of some oppressed people.

In this case, that means building a coalition of activists locally that can organize public support for the investigation and any other legal challenges to the "free state"'s plantations. *It is crucial that persons and groups concerned with the abuses at the MCAC and other control units keep close track of the investigatory process.* Any recommendations from the DoJ should be carefully scrutinized for their value and effectiveness. Furthermore, contingency plans should be made for the three possible outcomes of the letter of findings. If the DOJ investigation is blocked or stalled again, we need to be putting pressure on them, the prison administration, and the Department of Corrections to proceed. And as legal issues are raised, we as activists and as people with contacts inside the prisons need to be ready to do the research to back up the charges, if necessary, and to make sure that the issue doesn't pass us by quietly.

It will also be important to consider alternatives to the current judicial system. While the fear of "crime" is over-hyped and used for reactionary ends, it is a very real problem in many circumstances. Community-based solutions always seem to work better than the "quick-fixes" the state tries to sell us as a cover for its ulterior

depressed, rural areas. For these reasons, media attention was sparse, and communities welcomed jobs in times of depression, setting up a oppositional dynamic between prisoners and community.

Reports of brutality are so numerous, we know that brutality is a standard in control units. Numerous class action suites have been brought against cases of rape, sexual assault, and other forms of extreme brutality in these institutions, in a manner that signifies systemic, rather than isolated or independent problems.

These dynamics within the prison extend beyond the prison walls. Isolation and infliction of pain produces people psychologically and physically injured. Ninety-eight percent of prisoners complete terms and are reintroduced to society, bringing with them the twisted mentality and scars developed to cope with the trauma of isolation and torture. Correctional officers, prison officials and all who work in these Units take these dynamics home with them, outside the Penitentiary. But most importantly to realize, the repression in the control units is a reflection, an extension of our social order.

The repression in these gulags of the United States is spilling out into our lives, and the lives of our children. We must take notice. Our brother and sisters in these confined systems of control are crying out, struggling, screaming out for a new day, and an end to rule by power, oppression and torture.

Marion

As repressive measures, such as CARE(Control and Rehabilitation Effort), a "behavior modification" program, and 23 hour-a-day solitary confinement were instituted at Marion, violence rose. In July 1972, a Mexican prisoner was severely beaten by guards, and prisoners protested. In response, prison officials ordered long term solitary confinement of over 60 prisoners who protested. This entire unit at Marion was the first official "Long Term Control Unit."

Marion marked the beginning of the complete disregard for any adherence to American Correctional Association's *Manual of Standards*, and International Treaty obligation on prison standards. A new category of "Administrative Segregation" as distinct from "Punitive Segregation," allowed the prison officials

to put prisoners on solitary confinement independent of actions by the prisoner, and outside of the law which limits solitary confinement as a form of disciplinary, as opposed to administrative, segregation.

Conditions at Marion worsened, and in 1975, officials admitted many prisoners had been on solitary for over three years, a condition violating American Correctional Association code. In the 1980s, prisoners went on strike, with a list of human rights demands, including allowance of Native Americans to practice purification rights; allowance of religious services; elimination of the use of solid cell doors; improvements to medical care; and an end to harassment and beating of prisoners by guards.

In 1981 the Prison administration closed the prison factory to stifle the strike. On October 22, 1983, two guards were killed in the Control Unit, and in response, the prison administration permanently locked down the entire prison, making Marion the first prison entirely a locked down operation, with all 353 prisoners in solitary confinement over 21 hours a day. To this day, Marion is completely locked down.

These murders simply accelerated the plans of the BoP(Bureau of Prisons) to convert Marion into the first "control unit" prison. As Marion was not constructed as a "control unit", other facilities have been designed, perfected as high-tech units, where solid doors in cells prevents prisoner-prisoner interactions, and sliding remote-controlled doors eliminate guard-prisoner interactions.

Prisoners live in 8'x6' cells, do not have congregate dining, and have no access to rehabilitation programs. Non-contact visits, vicious beatings, forced rectal searches, 4-point spreads, where prisoners are tied by their arms and legs, spread eagle, have been reported. Rib spreaders, which are used to inflict pain without evidence of bruises or markings, are reported to be used at Marion, as well as in other control units. Despite court cases where over 50 prisoners testified to these conditions, the court ruled that the prisoners were not "credible witnesses." Inmates and other observers understood this to mean that the courts are complicit in torture, and provide no protection against the brutal conditions within prisons.

The history of Marion highlights the fact that many prisoners in Marion were political prisoners, prisoners of war, and politicized prisoners. This, in part, produced the peaceful prisoners' strike, and list of human rights demands in 1980.

Even beyond its economic basis, though, the entire U.S. prison system needs to be understood in terms of the Indian, Latino, and especially Black populations which are vastly overrepresented in its institutions. For a lot of people, prison is essentially a continuation of slavery, and of the ideology of white supremacy which had been developed to justify and perpetuate it. New African prisoner-of-war Sundiata Acoli, in his influential pamphlet *A Brief History of the New African Prison Struggle*, observes that within five years after the end of the Civil War, the Black prison population skyrocketed from nearly zero to over a third of the prison population of the South. Understand that this had nothing to do with Black people committing more "crimes", for the most part - "any transgression perceived by Whites to be of a serious nature was dealt with on the spot, providing the Black was unnamed..." Prison was only used as a means of repressing Black people who hadn't committed any real "crime".

We can see that, deprived of the "peculiar institution" that had created it, the ideology of white supremacy refused to die, rather, it began to make a few changes in its internal workings and immediately attached itself to the institution which most resembled the one it had lost. The Maryland prison population is currently over 75% people of African descent; the control units are more than 90%. Human rights activist Mauri Saalakhian cites figures that in Baltimore's poorer Black neighborhoods, over half of the young men are under direct state control - in prison, jail, or on parole or probation. The debilitating effect this has on the neighborhoods it affects is hard to ignore, and it seems nearly impossible for any community under these circumstances to sustain its social bonds, let alone make any kind of move towards self-sufficiency.

Building effective and radical local alliances against the prison

As with all struggles facing people who want to build a more humane world today, the struggle facing prisoners and those concerned with their welfare and rehabilitation contains two essential elements: a fight for reforms in the system and a radical critique of the system itself. Both movements have been growing in numbers and strength in Maryland as of late, and we believe that the two struggles are intrinsically connected and must work together for a real change in the punitive/imprisonment model of (not) dealing with social problems, of which the control units are only the most blatant example.

(or in a loose moment, "behavior modification) rather than brainwashing. The principle is the same, and it dates back long before the schizm between "capitalism" and "communism". What was the Grand Inquisition and witch-hunts of the Catholic Empire, if not a system of "correctional adjustment" applied to the dissidents and cultural outlaws (read: colonized people who refused to be assimilated) of its day? It is our belief that in all of the societies mentioned - in all authoritarian societies based on hierarchy, repression, and alienation - Dostoyevsky's formula holds true: the prison system demonstrates the most basic operating principles of the society. And looking comparatively in this light we find that the United States, far from its public facade of humaneness, is one of the most rigidly controlled societies the world has known.

Not only does a brief look at a control unit prison betray the lie of American "liberty and justice for all," but any examination of the American economic system will show why control units have become necessary for productive capitalist imperialism to sustain itself. We are willing to concede that even the most egalitarian and non-hierarchical of societies might still have problems with anti-social behavior; certainly with no large-scale exceptions in the world today, its hard to be certain otherwise. But it seems blatantly obvious that the vast majority of "crime" in Amerika today is a direct result of its appalling economic inequality, unmatched among "first-world" countries.

The majority of crimes that are punished with prison terms are non-violent or property offences - theft, vandalism, prostitution, burglary, and use or sale of drugs - crimes that are obviously motivated by the economic status of their perpetrators. And even most violent crimes are in large part motivated by class conflict and frustration at poverty and racism. It has become more and more difficult for the ruling class to convince poor and working people despite all evidence and reality that they have a stake in supporting the current system and recognizing its authority, so more and more fine-tuned and brutal instruments of structural repression are being introduced. Between 1980 and 1990, the US prison population more than doubled, while the violent crime rate stayed relatively constant. (One figure that did multiply at a comparable rate was the income difference between the managerial class and the average entry-level worker...)

Having strong organizers inside prison, was not ammenable to the Administration, and which soon thereafter responded with the complete lockdown of Marion.

The Proliferation of Control Units

In 1993, Florence, the United States Penitentiary Administrative Maximum Facility(ADX), in Colorado, replaced Marion as a supermaximum security Penitentiary, and was considered a more "perfected" unit, set up for sensory deprivation and psychological warfare. Florence sits on a contaminated site of a uranium mine, where the water is radioactively contaminated, and is situated in a depressed, poor area, which has 17% unemployment. Florence was designed so that, "one guard will be able to control movements of..numerous prisoners..by way of electronic doors, cameras, and audio equipment." Life at Florence is characterized by isolation housing, and no rehabilitation programs, as well as 21 hour lockdown.

In 1989 the Pelican Bay High Security Unit(SHU), in Northern California, opened, and holds 1056 prisoners in near isolation. One prisoner, Vaughn Dortch, was put in 145 degree water, burned over his entire body, intentionally, by guards. In *The Nation*, a nurse at the SHU provided this account:

A mentally ill patient named Vaughn Dortch had his hands cuffed behind his back by a group of corrections officers and was forced into a bath of 145o water. She heard an officer say of Dortch, who is African American, "It looks like we're going to have a white boy before this is through; his skin is so rotten and dirty it's all fallen off." She saw that Dortch's skin had peeled off and was hanging in clumps around his legs.

While Dortch sued the California Department of Corrections and won, still this cannot make up for the torture, nor the torture that is practiced regularly, and is bred by conditions in control units.

Women in U.S. prisons face a special kind of repression, particularly rape and sexual assault, in addition to other forms of torture and control. In 1992, a class action suit, *Cason v. Seckinger*, was brought against the State of Georgia by women prisoners who "...had filed complaints of rape, sexual assault, involuntary abortions

and retaliation or threats of retaliation of women who refused to participate in sexual activities with correctional personnel within the Georgia Women's Correctional Institution. Mentally ill women were among those vulnerable to degrading treatment, including being stripped and hogtied in their cells for days, where they could be viewed by male guards."

Control Units have also been established for women. Lexington Control Unit in Kentucky was a Control Unit for women which primarily held political prisoners and prisoners of war. Candidates were chosen based on political affiliations. Lexington was explicitly used as a means to punish revolutionaries and radicals. The hallmark of Lexington was the use of "isolation as torture," similar to the Nazis at Dachau, and in West Germany, in Stammheim, a prison where political prisoners were in isolation, and died.

In 1988 a lawsuit was brought to close the unit, which was clearly in violation of the United Nations Standards of Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners as well as the 1966 UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The ACLU National Prison Project as well as the General Board of the Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church issued condemnatory reports. The grassroots struggle against Lexington included political prisoner support committees, and strong support from the Puerto Rican Independence Movement.

In 1988 the Lexington "experiment" was forced into closing. According to the courts, this was not based on "cruel and unusual punishment," but on the political nature of imprisonment there. However, in 1988, the year Lexington Control Unit for women closed, it was replaced by the Shawnee Control Unit for women in Marianna, Florida. There were and still are ongoing reports of severe brutality and control, including cases of women being in solitary confinement for 7 years, not being allowed to shower for a year, and as a result being "covered in sores." Other standards are using deception, and false hope to manipulate prisoners, and planting false evidence on prisoners. One woman gives an account of her loved one's experience in Marianna:

Loretta Goins is a victim of torture... Thus far, Loretta has spent 9 months in Shawnee. 23 of those days in... 4 pointed restraints... unable to sleep with lights on 24/7 and when the torturer decided to cut off her drinking water she was forced to drink from her toilet. She was sprayed in the face with a fire extinguisher by Lt.

III: CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Units of political control and class repression

One thing we need to be clear about is that the proliferation of control units is not a "new method of dealing with crime", any more than the Nazi concentration camps were a new method (or "final solution") for dealing with dishonest usury and banking. They play a role in repressing us that is both ideological and racist. But bluntly stated capitalist ideology and the cruder forms of racism are starting to make people a little uncomfortable today when they can't close their eyes to the obvious and inevitable genocidal correlates. So problems like "crime" or "drugs" get invented, created, and made into propaganda for the destruction of human lives and community stability and the repression of dissent all across the board, but especially among the poor and non-white populations who, knowing firsthand the lies of capitalism, threaten to expose them to the rest of the country. And if we want to see past the lies, we're going to have to look at the situation in those terms.

For one, control units are nothing new in the world. There are parallels in almost every country today that is experiencing major political strife, anti-colonial/anti-imperialist uprisings, or major popular protest against state repression. Political prisoners in Ireland and Germany, for example, are often held in "dead wings", control units refined from the U.S. model and with similarly dehumanizing conditions. And a more naked form of isolation and torture of political prisoners is common under right-wing neo-colonial dictatorships all around the world. Control units are being pushed as much for their potential role in breaking the minds (and capability of resistance) of radical political prisoners as for their role in preventing or deterring street crime.

The scientific innovators behind the development of modern U.S. control units freely admit their intellectual debt to the methods of "re-education" which were developed during periods of ideological warfare in China and Korea. After adapting the methods to reflect the conditions and technology of the U.S. prison system - and placing the process in service of a much different ideological and cultural norm - they were ready to call these techniques "correctional adjustment"

the DoJ), are (1) a negotiated settlement of the issues of the MCAC, (2) the Governor's total acceptance of the recommendations of the DoJ, (3) The Governor's rejection of the terms of the DoJ.

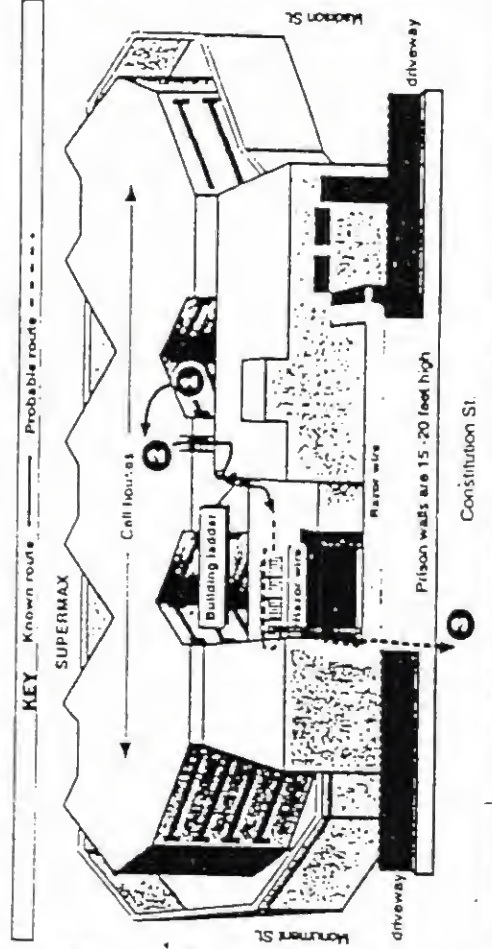
The official investigation of the MCAC reveals the the institutional limits and internal contradictions of the "justice system" and the political and economic system as a whole. To begin with, it must be emphasized that the investigation does *not* promise to shut the MCAC down, though hypothetically, this could be one of the DoJ's recommendations. There is also the glaring fact that the State so easily halted the DoJ with threats. More importantly, there is the fact that the very branch of the Federal government responsible, at least at a relatively low level, for investigating and possibly ameliorating conditions in the prisons, is the very one that—at a high level—has taken responsibility for building more prisons, putting more police on the streets, suspending civil rights in the name of a "war on drugs," and launching covert operations against political dissidents—all of which promises to keep the prisons overflowing, especially with the poor and oppressed. The \$10.2 billion for prisons (in addition to nearly \$80 billion spent on incarceration nationwide) that the Federal Government authorized last year is considered by many in power to be a fine Keynesian economic program, sure to turn prisons into cheap factories, carefully warehousing the surplus that cannot be maintained by the system "outside." It is certainly cheaper than a national full-employment program, even at minimum wage. The growing prison system is a version of social welfare to which almost everyone in government and industry consent.

After the DoJ investigation finally began, and on the heels of a legal precedent against the control unit model of imprisonment which was set by a class action suit brought against the Pelican Bay control unit in California, the MCAC's administration grudgingly began to make some much-needed reforms. The institution supposedly stopped accepting mentally ill convicts and "shuffled around" a few of the guards whose names had been repeatedly linked to brutality complaints. As of this writing, the prison exists in an uneasy equilibrium; there have been few incidents of guard brutality since May, but still the 23-hour-a-day lockdown, the gloomy paranoid environment without fresh air, sunshine, exercise, or relaxed companionship is grinding over the inmates' nerves and continuously producing claustrophobic tension that constantly threatens to explode into violence.

Danclark. She was soaked in restraints for six of the days—Her diet consisted of Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwiches 3x a day...and all of her body cavities searched...

The escape of Harold Benjamin Dean

1. Convict Dean, with an accomplice in an adjoining cell, manages to complete work on disassembly of the narrow horizontal window around 12:30 p.m., Nov. 30.
2. Dean squeezes out of the eight-inch high, 22-inch wide opening, then stands up while his accomplice holds his ankles. He hoists himself up to roof, slipping under razor wire. The accomplice lies to follow, but can't fit through the window.
3. Dean uses building ladders to descend to a lower roof and works his way to a wall along Constitution Street. He then uses his rope to lower himself to the street.



II: CONTROL UNITS IN MARYLAND'S CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM

Control is always present in the air. "Outside" is "inside".

The network of prisons in Maryland operates, as does any totalitarian system, on the basic principles of fear and deterrence. This is always implied beneath the official rhetoric, and inmates are constantly reminded of their position amidst the shouted orders, barely repressed violence, and arbitrary decisions made by invisible higher-ups. Just as people on the "outside" of prison walls are nevertheless constantly kept in check by the threat of police and prison, inmates anywhere in the system are always reminded that their situation "could always get worse" if they don't sufficiently fall over themselves showing "proper respect" for authority and regulations. The power of this threat derives from ambiguity in regulations, which gives prison administrators almost unlimited power when it comes to ordering transfers, reclassifications, lockdowns, etc.

For example, although theoretically inmates are assigned to institutions based on a "classification instrument" scorecard, in practice there is not necessarily any difference in "scores" between inmates who get sent to MCAC (super-max), MHC-Annex (max/super-max), and Md. Penitentiary (maximum). This same arbitrariness exists all the way down the line, where there is no clear distinction between inmates, for example, who get sent to MCI - Hagerstown, MCI - Jessup, MHC, or MCTC; all are medium-security institutions but there is a definite difference in conditions and opportunities available. The point isn't that more regulation is necessarily a good thing; we're just trying to point out how the lack of it is used to keep prisoners continually in fear of asserting their rights, attracting attention, etc. It has been well documented that this lack of clarity leaves it open to prison administrations to make political decisions about who gets sent where.

While the control units in Maryland may not hold any high-profile political prisoners as do, say, USP Marion, SHU Florence, FCI Marianna, or other well-known control units, the decision of who does time there is nonetheless based on politics. After his highly politicized and apparently fraud-filled trial and conviction in 1970, Black Panther Marshall Eddie Conway served several years in the South

National Prison Project attorney David Fathi described the institution as "totally counterproductive. When you treat people like animals, they are going to act like animals," and most of the inmates we contacted expressed similar opinions. A relative of inmate Bruce Wise, who filed a federal lawsuit after being beaten and repeatedly slammed into the wall while in the dreaded "three-piece" shackling device, describes the effect of the MCAC's conditions on inmates: "After three to four months, you start to see a real heightening of [the inmates'] paranoia. It is clear that the severe isolation is an attempt to cripple their minds."

Self-Correction? The System at Odds with Itself

Since its opening in 1989, a number of civil liberties and prisoners' rights groups, as well as government agencies, have received a steady flow of complaints about conditions and abuses from prisoners at the MCAC. Some of these form the basis of the section above. These were referred to the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ), which nearly two years ago started an investigation. The investigation stalled almost immediately, because the DoJ has no jurisdiction over Maryland's prisons, and the Office of the State Attorney General refused to allow investigators into the control unit until they had disclosed the names of the complainants. Luckily for the inmates of the MCAC, the officials of the DoJ special litigation section in charge of the investigation were wise enough not to divulge this information. Unhappily, as a result, no investigation took place until the state relented in April of 1995, fearful of a class action suit or other legal proceedings by the civil rights organizations or the DoJ. This change of policy was in large part due to continued pressure from independent, grass-roots organizations, including Friends Against Brutality and the Maryland Committee for a Responsible Corrections Policy.

The DoJ investigators entered the MCAC in May and found conditions to be terrible, despite the fact that the staff had advance warning of the inspection and had reportedly arranged to rotate out certain prisoners who had served long terms there, so as to appear to be keeping to disciplinary standards. The results of the DoJ investigation are to be published in a "letter of findings," due to be finished in the next few months. The letter will be sent with a series of recommendations to Governor Parris Glendening through the Office of the State Attorney General. The possible outcomes of this action, in order of likelihood (according to an official at

were taken for disciplinary segregation; many reported being stripped naked and manacled in a three-piece shackling device, where they were often beaten by guards and left to shiver in the 45 degree air with high-powered fans blowing near-freezing wind at their backs. One inmate reported to us being left in this device for as long as 3 days without being allowed to eat or use a toilet.

And besides the abusiveness of guards, inmates were divided amongst each other; the administration had no problems with systematically exploiting conflicts between inmates as yet another threat to use against inmates who might be thinking of "stepping out of line". Since the MCAC admitted those inmates it called "insane" as well as those it called "the worst of the worst" (a rare touch for a state control unit), there was plenty of behavior for the authorities to exploit. There were numerous reports of these inmates throwing feces around their cells, the hallways, and into the building's ventilation system. Many inmates and prisoners-rights advocates believe that the administration was allowing this behavior, if not actually encouraging it, as another form of coercion to use against inmates deemed "out-of-line". Prisoners who have threatened lawsuits, for example, or actively cooperated with the ACLU/DOJ investigation have found themselves transferred suddenly, with no explanation, to a cell between two inmates who regularly stayed up all night screaming and throwing shit around their cell.

In addition to flat-out brutality, the general atmosphere is one of thousands of minor violations of prisoners' humanity. What can they do if for no apparent reason, the guards on duty purposefully slow down the daily routine schedule and as a result they don't get to take their daily shower or recreation time? These minor everyday grievances, for which there is no real way of redressing, are a continual assault on prisoners' sense of self-worth. For example, Matthew Crawford, an inmate in the Maryland penal system who has had two stays in the MCAC, reported - and documented - a consistent pattern of money being stolen out of his account. (This pattern was corroborated by other inmates.) When he attempted to bring attention to the situation by filing a small-claims suit against the prison, a judge refused to accept his waiver of costs. He - and many other inmates all throughout the system, but especially in the control units - feel and believe that there is no way for them to address a situation of constant degradation and frustration.

The basic understanding among anyone with any contact with the prison is that this is a place of unspeakable torture, a place with no redeeming qualities. ACLU

Wing supermax before his transfer to the Maryland House of Corrections was approved. This despite having an infraction-free prison record and "model inmate" status. To give just one more current example, look at the case of death row inmate Flint Gregory Hunt, a Black man convicted of the murder of a white Baltimore police officer in 1985 and of course demonized in the press and during election campaigns ever since. Gregory was eligible for transfer out of the MCAC this summer with a nearly perfect record during the two-and-a-half years he had been at the institution. His transfer had even been approved by the warden, but apparently Commissioner Lanham had refused to sign it - until he was forced to by outside pressure. It seems to be a pretty basic general fact that anyone whose case can be made into an example, a piece of propaganda, or an issue in an election campaign, will be held under the harshest conditions available and demonized in the press in order to justify those same harsh conditions and that same demonization.

(Re)birth of a prison-house of nations

We will examine the history and conditions that inmates all the way down the line face, by focusing on two of the last stops on this prison railroad, the Maryland Correctional Adjustment Center (MCAC) and the lockdown unit at the Maryland House of Corrections - Annex (MHC-Annex). To understand how prisons like these were adopted so eagerly by the Department of Corrections and with so little protest from citizens' groups, it's necessary to look at the situation in the context of Maryland's shockingly bad history of incarcerating those human beings it refers to as the "worst of the worst". Until the winter of 1991, the state held as many as 400 inmates in the super-max 'South Wing' of the Maryland Penitentiary in downtown Baltimore, a 90-year-old building which was only designed at its inception to hold 280 people and which by 1985 had deteriorated so badly that it was described by engineers as being in "catastrophic danger" of collapsing at any time. The five-story dungeon was visibly tilting to one side, several cell doors had rusted completely shut, and slate from ceilings and walls was beginning to fall off regularly. In December 1990, after an inmate fell through the floor of his cell and injured himself, the DOC finally began moving inmates out of South Wing; a year later, the institution was finally closed.

From 1989 through 1991, in order to accommodate the inmates being moved out of

the South Wing, the Department of Corrections introduced two new facilities to define the "end of the line" of the state penal railroad. The Maryland Correctional Adjustment Center (MCAC), a newly constructed "state of the art" prison overtly modeled after USP Marion - at the time the most regimented and controlled prison in the federal system - was built to house 288 inmates under 22 1/2 hour-a-day isolation in 65 square-foot cells. In addition, a 144-bed segregation unit was opened at the Maryland House of Correction - Annex in Jessup, MD.

Aside from the horrifyingly dangerous condition of the building which housed it, a major reason for the DOC's eagerness to shut down the supermax at South Wing was a consistent pattern of lapses in security there. According to a former South Wing inmate, at one point it was common and easy for prisoners to smuggle in weapons and drugs, simply by having a friend or relative stand outside the cellblock and throw in the goods, after the inmate had sawed through the rusted grating covering the windows. Considering the tense conditions which existed between inmates and guards, it doesn't seem all that surprising that many inmates looked for self-defence, power, or escape through these methods.

The DOC, naturally, was threatened by the volatile situation it had helped to create and was determined not to make the same mistake again. Both of the new supermax facilities it opened operated with essentially no outside recreation for inmates, no-contact visits (inmates at the MCAC can only get 5 hours of visits a month anyways), and conditions of 22 or more hour-a-day lockdown, "innovations" which reflected the national trend during the 1980's of using total or small-group isolation, denial of inmates rights to own any kind of personal property, and lack of human contact as experiments in "behavior modification" on selected groups of inmates; especially (1) those whose strong belief systems (Islam, politics of the radical left, or adherence to prison honor codes, for example) cause them to be seen as a threat because of their refusal to respect authority, and (2) those who have lost contact with all family and friends in the outside world and are therefore unable to put up an effective struggle against their oppression.

To a degree, this program "worked": it broke many prisoners' spirits to the point where they were no longer recognizable as the human beings they once were. Walking around the Mount Vernon neighborhood of Baltimore, the prison complex is visible across the highway down the hill to the east. You can see the fortress

towers of the Maryland Penitentiary and the beige soulless boxes that are the new Classification and Diagnostic Center, but the "worst of the worst" is out of sight for the most part. Except if you look around... at the burnt-out wide-eyed homeless people hanging out on street corners, in front of the 7-11, in fear of anyone who passes by. These people weren't always like this; a lot of them have done time in the torture cells and been released to society, weak, broken, unable to escape more than a few blocks from the torturer, let alone "rehabilitate into society" or any other such nonsense. One prisoner wrote after finally getting a transfer out of the MCAC:

Everybody knows the Supermax Prisoners when they are transferred out to a lower security level because of the extreme paranoia and the enormous amount of weight lost. When I was transferred out of Supermax after three years I found myself walking back and forward and brothers would ask me what was wrong. I would say that old habits die hard. I walked back and forth like that to think, to exercise, and to keep warm while the cold blowers were being used to force prisoners to stay in their beds.

It is a true testimonial to the strength of the human spirit that even these conditions were not enough to stifle prisoners' creativity entirely. In November of 1990 - less than a year after the prison opened - lifer Harold Benjamin Dean became the first inmate to escape from a U.S. control unit when he crawled out through a cell window and escaped to begin a new life as a free man in the Midwest. This escape was only the first of many challenges to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections's public view that building Marion-style control units was the most efficient, safest, most humane way of dealing with the state's mushrooming prison population. Although the DOC could still point to a decrease in inmate-initiated violence over the old South Wing, (prisoners could rarely even socialize, let alone plan to take any kind of power into their hands) the claims that the MCAC would be more humane, cleaner, better for inmates' rehabilitation, or whatever all had to be conveniently forgotten or ignored.

Almost immediately upon its opening, the MCAC was surrounded by scandals. Warden Sweall Smith was pressured to leave as a result of a continued pattern of sexual harassment of female employees. Even more disturbing, reports of dehumanization and torture began to filter out of the nondescript, mostly underground brick building. We heard stories about a "Pink Room" where inmates